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THE
C A S E
OF OUR
FELLOW-CREATURES,

THE
Oppressed Africans,

RESPECTFULLY RECOMMENDED TO
THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION
OF THE
LEGISLATURE
OF
GREAT-BRITAIN,
BY THE PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS.

LONDON, PRINTED:

P H I L A D E L P H I A:

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TWEEN SECOND AND THIRD-STREETS.

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367

Sept. 27, 1877

Summer Sale



THE following petition was presented to the Parliament of Great-Britain, by a deputation from the yearly-meeting of our brethren in that nation, held in London in the 6th month, 1783; and the representation hereto subjoined, has since been delivered to the King and his ministers, the members of parliament, and others in authority there.

The like benevolent motives which actuated our brethren in that kingdom, thus publicly to advocate the cause of the most oppressed part of the human species, induced our yearly-meeting held in Philadelphia last year, to address the Congress of these American states, on the same very interesting and important subject, which being courteously received, we are encouraged to republish the above mentioned petition and representation, in hope the minds of those who are invested with power here, may become so effectually moved by a sense of the enormity of the evil complained of, as to exert their authority to remove it, that the cry of this oppression may not be continued in our land.

Signed in and by order of the meeting
for sufferings, in Philadelphia, 16th
of the 9th month, 1784.

JOHN DRINKER, CLERK.



T H E
C A S E
O F T H E
OPPRESSED AFRICANS.

WE are engaged, under a sense of duty, to bear a public testimony against a species of oppression which, under the sanction of national authority, has long been exercised upon the natives of Africa, is grown up into a system of tyranny, and is unhappily become a considerable branch of the commerce of this kingdom: an oppression which in the injustice of its origin, and the inhumanity of its progress, has not, we apprehend, been exceeded, or even equalled, in the most barbarous ages.

We are taught, both by the holy scriptures, and by the experience of ages, to believe that the Righteous Judge of the whole earth chastiseth nations for their sins, as well as individuals: and can it be expected that he will suffer this great iniquity to go unpunished?

unpunished? As the design of the institution of government is for a terror to evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well, we wish it may be seriously considered, whether this has been made the rule of its administration in this land. Will it not rather be found on inquiry, that, with respect to the enslaved negroes, its benevolent purposes have been perverted; that its terrors have fallen on the innocent, while evil doers, and oppressors, have been openly encouraged?

But notwithstanding government, in former times, have been induced by what we conceive to be a mistaken, as well as an unjust, policy, to promote this evil, we are persuaded that many of the present members of the legislature, as true friends of civil and religious liberty, hold this unrighteous traffic in the utmost abhorrence. This persuasion, joined to the favourable reception of the petition of our last Yearly-meeting to the House of Commons, encourages us to address you, thus freely, on this important subject; and we apprehend that the abolition of this iniquitous practice is not only required by the calls of justice and humanity, but is also consistent with sound policy. For avarice in this, as in other instances, has defeated its own purpose. Africa, so populous, and so rich in vegetable and mineral productions, instead of affording all the advantages of a well regulated commerce, is scarcely known but as a mart for slaves, and as the scene of violence and barbarities, perpetrated, in order to procure them, by men professing the Christian religion.

The arguments which have been advanced by the few writers, who have attempted to justify this inhuman business, can have no weight with generous minds. Those, in particular, which are drawn from the permission to hold slaves amongst the Jews, can in no wise be applied to the practice amongst us: for, blessed be the God and Father of all our mercies,

cies,* who hath made of one blood all nations of men, we now live under a dispensation essentially different from that of the law; in which many things were permitted to the Jews, because of the hardness of their hearts. All distinctions of name and country, so far as they relate to the social duties, are now abolished. We are taught by our blessed Redeemer to look upon all men, even our enemies, as neighbours and brethren, and to do unto them as we would they should do unto us.

Under a dispensation so admirably adapted to promote the temporal as well as the eternal happiness of mankind, that any should deviate so far from its principles, as to encourage a practice so replete with iniquity, and in particular that this nation, generally characterized by its attachment to civil and religious liberty, should have contributed, perhaps more than any other, to the establishment and continuance of slavery, is a most painful reflection. It would surely have been more consistent with the avowed principles of Englishmen, both as men and as Christians, if their settlement in heathen countries had been succeeded by mild and benevolent attempts to civilize their inhabitants, and to incline them to receive the glad tidings of the gospel. But how different a conduct towards them has been pursued! it has not only been repugnant in a political view, to those commercial advantages which a fair and honourable treatment might have procured, but has evidently tended to increase the barbarity of their manners, and to excite in their minds an aversion to that religion, the professors whereof so cruelly treat them.

This traffic is the principal source of the destructive wars which prevail among these unhappy people, and it is attended with consequences, the mere recital of which is shocking to humanity. The violent separation of the dearest relatives, the tears of

B

conjugal

conjugal and parental affection, the reluctance of the slaves to a voyage from which they can have no prospect of returning, must present scenes of distress which would pierce the heart of any, in whom the principles of humanity are not wholly effaced. This, however, is but the beginning of sorrows with the poor captives. Under their cruel treatment on ship-board, where, without regard to health or decency, hundreds are confined within the narrow limits of the hold, numbers perish; and, by what is called the seasoning in the Islands, many are relieved by a premature death, from that series of accumulated sufferings which awaits their less happy survivors. The measure of their afflictions yet remains to be filled; being sold to the highest bidder, and branded with a hot iron, they have yet to linger on, unpitied, the whole term of their miserable existence, in excessive labour, and too often under the merciless controul of unprincipled and unfeeling men, without proper food or cloathing, or any encouragement to sweeten their toil; whilst every fault, real, or imaginary, is punished with a rigour which is but weakly restrained by the colony laws: instances of the greatest enormity, even the most wanton or deliberate murder of the slaves, being only punished, if punished at all, by trifling pecuniary fines.

But a bare enumeration of the calamities of this wretched people, would exceed the limits proposed to this short address: we think it not improper, however, to give the following extract from a late author, who was an eye-witness of the miseries of this persecuted race.

“ If we bring this matter home, and, as Job
 “ proposed to his friends, “ put our soul in their
 “ souls stead;” if we consider ourselves, and our
 “ children, as exposed to the hardships which these
 “ people lie under, in supporting an imaginary
 “ greatness;

“ Did

“ Did we, in such case, behold an increase of
 “ luxury and superfluity among our oppressors, and
 “ therewith feel an increase of the weight of our
 “ burdens, and expect our posterity to groan under
 “ oppression after us ;

“ Under all this misery, had we none to plead
 “ our cause, nor any hope of relief from man, how
 “ would our cries ascend to the God of the spirits
 “ of all flesh, who judgeth the world in righteousness,
 “ and, in his own time, is a refuge for the
 “ oppressed !

“ When we were hunger-bitten, and could not
 “ have sufficient nourishment, but saw them in full-
 “ ness, pleasing their taste with things fetched from
 “ far ;

“ When we were wearied with labour, denied
 “ the liberty to rest, and saw them spending their
 “ time at ease ; when garments, answerable to our
 “ necessities, were denied us, while we saw them
 “ clothed in that which was costly and deli-
 “ cate ;

“ Under such affliction, how would these painful
 “ feelings rise up as witnesses against their pretended
 “ devotion ! And if the name of their religion
 “ were mentioned in our hearing, how would it
 “ sound in our ears, like a word which signified
 “ self-exaltation and hardness of heart !

“ When a trade is carried on productive of much
 “ misery, and they who suffer by it are some thou-
 “ sands miles off, the danger is the greater of not
 “ laying their sufferings to heart.

“ In procuring slaves from the coast of Africa,
 “ many children are stolen privately ; wars also
 “ are encouraged among the negroes : but all is
 “ at a great distance. Many groans arise from dy-
 “ ing men, which we hear not. Many cries are
 “ uttered by widows and fatherless children, which
 “ reach not our ears. Many cheeks are wet with
 “ tears, and faces sad with unutterable grief, which
 “ we see not. Cruel tyranny is encouraged. The
 “ hands

“ hands of robbers are strengthened; and thou-
 “ sands reduced to the most abject slavery, who
 “ never injured us.

“ Were we, for the term of one year only, to be
 “ eye-witnesses to what passeth in getting these
 “ slaves; was the blood which is there shed, to
 “ be sprinkled on our garments; were the poor
 “ captives, bound with thongs, heavy laden with
 “ elephants teeth, to pass before our eyes, in their
 “ way to the sea;

“ Were their bitter lamentations, day after day,
 “ to ring in our ears, and their mournful cries in
 “ the night, to hinder us from sleeping!

“ Were we to hear the sound of the tumult,
 “ when the slaves on board the ships attempt to kill
 “ the English, and behold the issue of those bloody
 “ conflicts: what pious man could be a witness to
 “ these things, and see a trade carried on in this
 “ manner, without being deeply affected with sor-
 “ row?”

Our religious society in these kingdoms, and in
 North America, have for many years tenderly sym-
 pathized with this unhappy people, under their com-
 plicated sufferings, and have endeavoured to pro-
 cure them relief: nor has their cause been without
 other advocates; whose numbers we have with much
 satisfaction observed to increase. The expectation
 of many, who are anxiously concerned for the sup-
 pression of this national evil, is now under Provi-
 dence, fixed upon the wise and humane interposi-
 tion of the legislature; to whom, with dutiful sub-
 mission, we earnestly recommend the serious con-
 sideration of this important subject; with a pleasing
 hope, that the result will be, a prohibition of this
 traffic in future, and an extension of such relief to
 those who already groan in bondage, as justice and
 mercy may dictate, and their particular situations
 may admit. That so the blessings of those who are
 ready to perish may rest upon you, and this nation
 may no longer, on their account, remain obnoxious
 to

to the righteous judgments of the Lord, who, in the most awful manner, declared by his prophet, “ That the land should tremble,* and every one “ mourn that dwelleth therein, for the iniquity of “ those who oppress the poor, and crush the needy;” and who likewise pronounced a “ woe† “ unto him, that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth “ his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.”

*Signed by order of the Meeting for Sufferings, †
London, the 28th day of the eleventh month,
1783, by*

J O H N A D Y,

CLERK to the MEETING.

* Amos iv and viii. chap.

† Jeremiah xxii. chap.

‡ This meeting is composed of about one hundred members residing in London, who are chosen by, and correspond with, the meetings in the country. It was instituted, and thus named, during the times of persecution, (anno 1675) in order to receive accounts of the sufferings, of our members, and to solicit relief from those in power. It still continues to superintend the general concerns of the society during the intervals of the Yearly-meeting.

F I N I S.

BOOKS to be sold by JOSEPH CRUKSHANK.

THE Original, and Present State of Man, briefly considered; wherein is shewn, the nature of his fall, and the necessity, means, and manner of his restoration, thro' the sacrifice of Christ, and the sensible operation of that divine principle held forth to the world by the people called Quakers.

Some account of the life, and gospel labours of William Reckett, late of Lincolnshire in Great-Britain: also, memoirs of the life, religious experiences, and gospel labours of James Gough, late of Dublin, deceased.

An account of the life of that ancient servant of Jesus Christ, John Richardson, giving a relation of many of his exercises in his youth, and his services in the work of the ministry, in England, Ireland, America, &c.

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Capt. Carver's three years travels, through the interior parts of North-America, for more than five thousand

thousand miles, containing an account of the great lakes, and all the lakes, islands, and rivers, cataracts, mountains, minerals, soil and vegetable productions of the north-west regions of that vast continent ; with a description of the birds, beasts, reptiles, insects, and fishes, peculiar to the country. Together with a concise history of the genius, manners and customs of the Indians inhabiting the lands that lie adjacent to the heads, and to the westward of the great river Mississippi; and an appendix describing the uncultivated parts of America, that are most proper for forming settlements.

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A journal of the life, travels, sufferings, Christian experiences, and labour of love in the work of the ministry of George Fox.

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An essay on the treatment and conversion of African slaves. By James Ramfey, M. A. vicar of Teston, in Kent.

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Some principles and precepts of the Christian religion, by way of question and answer. By Samuel Fuller.

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S T A T I O N A R Y.

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COMMONS of GREAT-BRITAIN, in
PARLIAMENT assembled.

The PETITION of the People called
QUAKERS,

SHEWETH,

“ **T**HAT your petitioners met in this their
annual assembly, having solemnly con-
sidered the state of the enslaved Negroes, con-
ceive themselves engaged in religious duty to lay
the suffering situation of that unhappy people be-
fore you, as a subject loudly calling for the hu-
mane interposition of the Legislature. Your pe-
titioners regret, that a nation professing the Chri-
stian faith, should so far counteract the principles
of humanity and justice, as by cruel treatment of
this oppressed race, to fill their minds with pre-
judices against the mild and beneficent doctrines
of the Gospel.

“ Under the countenance of the laws of this
country, many thousands of these our fellow crea-
tures, entitled to the natural rights of mankind,
are held as personal property in cruel bondage;
and your petitioners being informed that a bill
for the regulation of the African trade, is now be-
fore the House, containing a clause which re-
strains the officers of the African Company from
exporting Negroes: your petitioners, deeply af-
fected with a consideration of the rapine, oppressi-
on, and bloodshed, attending this traffic, humbly
request, that this restriction may be extended to
all persons whatsoever, or that the House would
grant such other relief in the premises, as in its
wisdom may seem meet.”

*Signed in and on behalf of our yearly-meeting,
held in London, the 16th day of the sixth
month, 1783.*

